United Nations A/52/PV.92

General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

92nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 8 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Expression of sympathy to the Governments and peoples of Bangladesh and China

The President: May I, on behalf of all Member States, extend our deepest sympathy to the Governments and peoples of Bangladesh and China for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage which have resulted from the recent floods. May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

Agenda item 120 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/52/785/Add.11)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/52/785/Add.11, the Secretary-General informs me that since the issuance of his communications contained in documents A/52/785 and addenda 1 to 10, Seychelles has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda of the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly and organization of work

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/52/340/Add.2)

The President: I should now like to draw the attention of representatives to document A/52/340/Add.2, which contains a letter dated 19 August 1998 addressed to me by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences.

As Members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has received a request from the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to meet in New York from 8 to 11 September 1998. The meeting of the Executive Board straddles two regular sessions of the General Assembly.

Therefore, so as to enable the Executive Board to meet without the interruption that would be necessary if the request were submitted for approval to the Assembly

98-85731 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

at its fifty-third session, the request is being transmitted to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

May I take it that the General Assembly authorizes the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund to meet in New York during the main part of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 39 (*continued*)

Oceans and the law of the sea

(a) Law of the sea

Note by the Secretary-General (A/52/968)

Draft resolution (A/52/L.80)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/52/L.80.

Mr. Henze (Germany): It is my pleasure and honour to introduce a draft resolution on the Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship between the United Nations and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea to the General Assembly today. Thirty-eight countries are listed as sponsors on the draft resolution. In addition to these, Panama, the Philippines and Sri Lanka have also signed, bringing the number to 41. I am very happy and grateful that there has been such broad support for the draft.

The United Nations and the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea signed an Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship last December. In that context, may I recall resolution 51/34 of December 1996, in which the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to conclude such an agreement. Meanwhile, the Agreement was approved by the Tribunal in March and by the States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea this year. The text of the Agreement, which is attached to the draft resolution, by and large follows the lines drawn in the Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the International Seabed Authority. This latter agreement was approved without a vote by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/27 of November 1997.

It is my firm belief that the draft resolution represents a totally uncontroversial item. I therefore request delegations to kindly lend it their support.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/204 of 17 December 1996, I now call on Mr. Gritakumar E. Chitty, Registrar for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Mr. Chitty (International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea): It is indeed a pleasure and an honour for me to address the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on behalf of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea on the occasion of the consideration by the Assembly of the draft resolution on the Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship between the United Nations and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. I do so in particular on behalf of the President of the Tribunal, Judge Thomas Mensah, and the other Judges. President Mensah regrets his inability to be present here today.

On behalf of the Tribunal, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your very positive remarks and the kind words addressed to the Tribunal during the discussion last December by the General Assembly of the item "Oceans and the law of the sea", and for the distribution of the statement of the President of the Tribunal on that occasion. He was not able to deliver it in person due to the institution of proceedings before the Tribunal in a case submitted to it. I also wish to express my personal congratulations to you, Sir, for your leadership in bringing this challenging fifty-second session to a successful conclusion.

Our special thanks also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his continuing support and direct and personal interest in the work of the Tribunal, and most importantly, for bringing about the early conclusion of this Agreement on Relationship and Cooperation between the Tribunal and the United Nations. His warm congratulations to the Tribunal on its achievements on the occasion of its first anniversary augured well for the Tribunal. Shortly thereafter, the Tribunal received and commenced deliberations on its first case.

I would like to express the special gratitude of the Tribunal to the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany for the initiative taken in sponsoring this draft resolution. The Tribunal is very appreciative of the generous assistance and hospitality accorded to it by the German Federal Government and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

The Tribunal looks forward to the move, at the beginning of the year 2000, to the excellent facilities of its permanent headquarters, which are presently under construction.

The Tribunal is also appreciative of the strong support extended to it by the 41 Member States that have sponsored draft resolution A/52/L.80, which it is hoped will shortly be adopted with widespread approval.

The Agreement on Cooperation and Relationship finds its origins in the draft prepared by the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Negotiations between the Office of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations and the Registry of the Tribunal proceeded on the basis of this draft. The negotiations were constructive and expeditious and resulted in early agreement upon the terms for conclusion of the relationship Agreement. On behalf of the Tribunal, I would like to convey special thanks to the Office of the Legal Counsel for the cooperation it extended at all times.

The Agreement was signed at United Nations Headquarters on 18 December 1997 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Tribunal. Article 14 of the Agreement requires that the General Assembly and the Tribunal approve the Agreement as a condition for its entry into force. The Tribunal confirmed its approval of the Agreement on 12 March 1998. The approval of the Agreement today by the General Assembly would conclude the process, which has been marked by a spirit of cooperation in the negotiations, which the Tribunal looks forward to as being the hallmark of the implementation of the relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the Tribunal.

The Agreement formalizes the essential cooperation and interaction between the Tribunal and the United Nations, just as the Convention on the Law of the Sea itself foresaw the need for such an arrangement in establishing the new institutions under the Convention and in entrusting substantial functions to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Tribunal is most grateful for the support of the United Nations in various and diverse respects. This is exemplified by the support of the Legal Counsel of the United Nations, Mr. Hans Corell, and the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea during the start-up, preparatory and organizational phases of the Tribunal with the temporary assignment of staff to the Tribunal.

The Tribunal also extends its appreciation to the Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Mr. Ismat Steiner, and the members of the Division for the assistance provided during the important period of the constitution of the Tribunal and for their ongoing support.

The approval of the Agreement by the General Assembly will pave the way for further and more efficient cooperation. The Agreement provides, *inter alia*, for the exchange of information and documents between the United Nations and the Tribunal and for cooperation on a range of matters. These provisions will promote the Tribunal's objective to be a user-friendly, cost-effective and efficient institution. The Tribunal has placed great importance on these principles in its rules of procedure and has endeavoured to achieve efficiency and effectiveness by setting short time limits for each step in the proceedings before the Tribunal. The rules provide for prompt hearings and recognize the opportunities that modern technology has to offer in expediting and facilitating proceedings before the Tribunal.

These initiatives are reflected in the expeditious disposal by the Tribunal of the first case submitted to it, a case concerning the prompt release of an arrested vessel and its crew. The judgement of the Tribunal at the conclusion of the proceedings, which lasted less than four weeks, was complied with, and the vessel and crew were subsequently released. Following the proceedings on the prompt release of the vessel and its crew, the parties, by joint agreement, have submitted the dispute on the merits of the case to the Tribunal.

I shall be most pleased to inform the Tribunal of the deliberations of the General Assembly and of its decisions at the fifty-second session under this item when the Tribunal convenes in Hamburg in two weeks for its sixth session.

The Tribunal would welcome and appreciate the widest possible support for this draft resolution. It is most fitting that this Agreement should enter into force during the International Year of the Ocean.

I thank you and wish this session of the General Assembly a successful conclusion.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/52/L.80, which was just introduced by the representative of Germany. Since there are no speakers in explanation of vote, the Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Agreement on cooperation and

relationship between the United Nations and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.80?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/251).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 39 and to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 58

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Letter from the President of the Economic and Social Council (A/52/1022)

The President: I would like to draw the attention of delegations to a letter dated 21 August 1998 from the President of the Economic and Social Council addressed to me. This letter is contained in document A/52/1022, to which is annexed Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 entitled "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of document A/52/1022?

It was so decided.

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker on the list of speakers, I should like to congratulate the Economic and Social Council on its success in negotiating resolution 1998/46 on the reform and revitalization of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The Assembly will recall that in its resolution 52/12 B the Assembly, *inter alia*, invited the Economic and Social Council to consider, at its organizational and substantive sessions in 1998 — as part of the review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of its functional commissions and expert groups and bodies, as mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 50/227 — the recommendations of the Secretary-General relating to the reform of these subsidiary bodies and to report thereon to the Assembly as early as possible during its fifty-second session.

In that same resolution, the Assembly also invited the Council, in consultation with Member States and appropriate intergovernmental regional bodies, to conduct a general review of the regional commissions at its substantive session of 1998, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of resolution 50/227 and the individual reviews each commission had already carried out, in order to consider the competencies of the regional commissions, taking into account the competencies of global bodies and other regional and subregional intergovernmental bodies, and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly before the end of its fifty-second session.

As a Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, I was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting consultations as mandated by Assembly resolution 50/227 and later reinforced by resolution 52/12 B on United Nations reforms. The process started back in March 1997 and ended successfully with the adoption of a resolution at the last substantive session of the Council in July. The mandate, although an arduous one, was carried out in time.

Any reform initiative of the United Nations, in order to withstand the test of time, must involve the entire membership of the United Nations. The enthusiasm with which the Member States engaged in this prolonged activity is a testimony to the seriousness and commitment with which they view the importance of measures that are needed for making the United Nations more efficient and effective. The broad participation in the negotiation process, the rich inputs provided by the membership and the support and contribution of the delegations made this undertaking a success. It is an achievement for all of us.

The review has resulted in an agreement on specific measures to streamline and improve the working methods of the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council. The adoption of this package resulted in a decrease in the number of members of one of the subsidiary bodies, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, from 53 to 33. The Committee for Development Planning has been renamed the Committee for Development Policy with retention of its acronym CDP. It is comprised of 24 independent experts with a good mix of expertise who are to be nominated by the Secretary-General after consultation

with the interested Governments and then approved by ECOSOC. The review process resulted in the termination of mandates of two subsidiary bodies: the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development. It gave rise to a new body, named the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, with the acronym CENRD.

In addition to the achievement of an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the subsidiary bodies, it has been estimated by the Secretariat that the process would result in a reduction in real terms of more than $150,000 during the biennium 1998-1999. This is the first time we are saving money while also looking forward to an efficient and effective functioning of the system.

By the Council's action at its last substantive session, we completed one of the most complex, laborious and substantive exercise for the review of the subsidiary bodies of the Council. This is the first time since the creation of these bodies that such an extensive and important review has been undertaken and — I must emphasize — successfully completed.

The fifty-second session of the Assembly, which we are concluding today, has been called the reform Assembly. The action by the Council has contributed in a very effective way to the reform process being pursued so vigorously at the United Nations. It is our hope that the momentum and positive interaction generated by this review of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council will be maintained and continued in the days ahead, so that the efficiency and effectiveness of the bodies engaged in the economic and social fields contribute substantially to the objectives of international cooperation for development.

In closing, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all delegations for their constant support in making this result possible.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the countries of the European Free Trade Association members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

Let me, at the outset, commend Ambassador Chowdhury for his engagement and very able leadership in steering us through the process of reviewing the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The European Union has always considered resolution 50/227 and resolution 52/12 B as important steps in, among other things, strengthening and revitalizing ECOSOC. We see the intergovernmental machinery as an integral part of the overall reform process, in tandem with and mutually supportive of the reform efforts at the organizational and managerial levels. The proliferation of the subsidiary machinery of ECOSOC which has taken place over the years has resulted in weakening the Council's overall guidance and coordination role. The European Union has therefore attached high importance to the review process mandated by resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B and has sought to contribute substantively to the negotiations.

The review process did not result in far-reaching institutional changes. Nevertheless, the outcome represents a first step forward in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the intergovernmental structure.

Let me now make some specific remarks on the measures contained in the three annexes to ECOSOC resolution 1998/46, reproduced in document A/52/1022.

With regard to the four priority bodies, we would like to highlight the merger of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources into a single expert body. With ensured coherence between the respective work programmes of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the new Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development, the output of the latter body should be more useful in the intergovernmental process. The new arrangements for the Committee for Development Planning should also help to bring the work of this body much better in line with the needs and interests of the intergovernmental bodies, in particular ECOSOC. The work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, by concentrating on the needs of the CSD and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), should become more focused. This should also be facilitated by the reduction in its membership.

We hope that the recommendations which came out of the review of the functional commissions with conference follow-up responsibilities will ensure a better use of their potential within the overall United Nations structure and give their work added value in the implementation of United Nations conferences. Focusing on the exchange of experiences in the implementation of the conference outcomes and on the review of progress in this respect should help them to fulfil this task. This process should be supported by improved working methods such as refocusing the general debates and expanding interaction with experts and civil society. The role of the bureaus of the functional commissions, as well as enhanced coordination among them and the bureau of ECOSOC, will be crucial not only for a more effective role of the individual commissions but also for increasing the overall coherence of their work.

It should be clearly understood that each functional commission should be encouraged to adopt practices best suited to its particular mandate and responsibilities. The recommendations contained in the respective annex may therefore not necessarily be appropriate or sensible for all functional commissions to adopt in every case.

While the distinct nature of each of the regional commissions and its main responsibility towards the needs of the region are recognized, the regional commissions should also contribute to improving the United Nations overall relevance and effectiveness. The measures contained in annex III should help in this respect by determining the Secretariat's responsibilities, which should consequently lead to a more focused division of labour between Headquarters and the regional and national levels.

We welcome the efforts by the Secretary-General to overcome the shortcomings in coordinating regional activities within the United Nations system. However, arrangements proposed to this end — such as the yearly meetings among the relevant United Nations entities engaged in regional activities held under the direct aegis of the Secretary-General — should be determined by the needs of each region and should build on already existing coordination mechanisms and focus on issues where coordination is required at the regional level. The recommendation on close cooperation between the regional commissions and other, non-United Nations regional or subregional bodies should help to reinforce synergies and avoid duplications, thereby ensuring an optimal use of resources. We hope that the measures contained in the final part will improve not only the interaction between ECOSOC and the regional commissions, but also among the regional commissions themselves.

The review process has not been completed. We should strive for its completion as soon as possible. We still have to address the remaining Track 2 proposals of the Secretary-General which aim to strengthen the coordination role of ECOSOC as well as the rationalization of its subsidiary machinery. As to the outcome of the review process, it is clear that the focus must be now on the implementation of these measures. But at some point in time, preferably in 2001, the effectiveness of these new arrangements will have to be reviewed.

Mr. Hapsoro (Indonesia): I am pleased to take the floor in order to address a few brief remarks to the Assembly on the resolution entitled "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

Let me, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, express heartfelt appreciation to Ambassador Karim Chowdhury of Bangladesh, who has been a valuable resource to all of us in the very complex and prolonged negotiations on this resolution during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) last July. Under his stewardship we have made considerable progress in the efforts to undertake a review in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/227 of the mandates, composition, function and working methods of the Council's functional commissions, expert groups and bodies and of the regional commissions.

Indeed, thanks to Ambassador Chowdhury's considerable skills and expertise we have been able to move forward in several areas, although we recognize that due to the complexity of the undertakings, additional time will be needed. The Group would therefore like to agree with the statement made by Ambassador Chowdhury, that this is the first time in our history that such an undertaking — such an overview — has been successfully completed.

The Group of 77 and China are of the view that given the progress achieved thus far, and with additional deliberations, we can work together to improve the coordination of the activities of ECOSOC and strengthen and harmonize its work with a view to strengthening efforts in restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. In this regard we would like to express our confidence that the

measures we have adopted will enhance the positive interaction among the organs within the United Nations system which deal with the aforementioned issues.

I believe that it is safe to say that while the negotiations that we have undertaken over the past several months have not been easy, we have nevertheless managed to reach a consensus on several critical and important issues. We are also encouraged by the spirit of partnership and flexibility, which was quite remarkable during the negotiations and which facilitated our work so that we were able to arrive at a consensus.

We note that we have remaining tasks ahead, mandated by resolutions 50/227 and 52/12 B, but we are optimistic that with additional time and further refection on the respective positions on outstanding items, we are well positioned to successfully complete those tasks.

My statement would not be complete without mentioning the critical issues on which we have not been very successful so far. The Assembly may recall that when we adopted resolution 50/227, we did so with the conviction that its successful implementation required the implementation of all its provisions. So far the provision on resources has been left behind and the implementation has fallen short. It is therefore very urgent that this issue, too, be addressed in the near future. In this context we hope that the discussion during the fifty-third session on funding for operational activities will facilitate the full implementation of resolution 50/227.

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China will continue to work to improve, restructure and revitalize the work of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. It is our expectation that as we approach the year 2000, we can benefit from the successful implementation of what we adopted today, and it is our earnest hope that we will come to a successful conclusion in our endeavour.

Ms. King (United States of America): The United States welcomes the outcome of the work of the Economic and Social Council as described in the letter from the President of the Council. In 1996, with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/227, the United Nations began to realize the role of the Economic and Social Council originally set out in the Charter. With the additional impetus of the Secretary-General's reform proposals, and under the skilful leadership of Council Presidents Karel Kovanda, Valdimir Galuška and Juan Somavía, these reforms have begun to take effect. My delegation would like to give special recognition to Ambassador Chowdhury for steering these deliberations over the last several years.

More remains to be done, but the measures taken today represent an important achievement in making the Economic and Social Council the key coordinating body for the extensive and vital work of the United Nations on development, economic issues, human rights and social issues and for the effective oversight of its many subsidiary bodies. We look forward to working with all of our partners to pursue and fully implement this role for ECOSOC as one of this institution's principal organs.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Document A/52/1022 contains some mistakes, and I believe that it is appropriate for me to bring them to the attention of the Assembly. In annex III, the last sentence of paragraph 13 contains two mistakes: instead of "these resources" it should read "implementation of these recommendations", and '1996" should read "1999". The sentence should read:

> "In this regard, the Council encourages the Secretary-General to take into account the implementation of these recommendations in his report under the agenda item entitled 'Regional Cooperation' in 1999."

The President: The recommended corrections will be noted by the Secretariat and a corrigendum will accordingly be issued at a later stage.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 58?

It was so decided.

Reports of the First Committee

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the First Committee on agenda items 73 and 83.

I request the Rapporteur of the First Committee, Mr. Miloš Koterec of Slovakia, to introduce the reports of the First Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Koterec (Slovakia), Rapporteur of the First Committee: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the

General Assembly the reports of the First Committee on agenda items 73 and 83 as contained in documents A/52/602/Add.1 and A/52/612/Add.1. As delegates may recall, in December 1997 the General Assembly suspended consideration of these two items until the resumed session of the First Committee in summer 1998.

It was further decided that the Disarmament Commission would also report to the resumed session on the result of its deliberations on the issue of the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of its work in accordance with the request contained in General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997.

During the period between December 1997 and June 1998, the Chairman of the First Committee, assisted by the Bureau members, conducted intensive consultations with all interested delegations. As a result of these efforts and good-will cooperation extended to him by delegations, the Chairman was able to produce and present to the resumed session a text which commanded broad-based understanding and support.

At the 1998 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, the Committee of the Whole considered the issue of the rationalization of its work. The Chairman of the Commission also conducted a series of informal, open-ended consultations. The result of these consultations was reflected in the final report of the Disarmament Commission as the Chairman's text. Accordingly, the Chairman was strongly encouraged by the delegations to continue his efforts during the time remaining before the resumed session. Consequently, an intensive round of informal consultations prior to the resumed session produced a consensus text.

The resumed session of the First Committee, held on 29 June 1998, considered and adopted by consensus two documents: a draft decision entitled "Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee", submitted by the Chairman of the First Committee; and a draft decision entitled "Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session: Report of the Disarmament Commission", submitted by Algeria, Belarus, Croatia, Ecuador, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Luxembourg, Peru, South Africa, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic and Uganda.

With these brief remarks, I present two outstanding reports of the First Committee to the General Assembly for consideration, contained in documents A/52/602/Add.1 and A/52/612/Add.1.

Lastly, allow me once again to express my gratitude to all delegations; the Chairman of the First Committee, Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe; fellow members of the Bureau, the Under-Secretary-General; the Secretariat staff and others, who during the last year have contributed to the work of the First Committee.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the First Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the First Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the First Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the First Committee, unless the Secretariat was notified otherwise in advance.

Agenda item 73 (*continued*)

Review of the implementation of the recommendations and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session

Report of the First Committee (Part II) (A/52/602/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the First Committee in paragraph 4 of Part II of its report (A/52/602/Add.1).

The First Committee adopted the draft decision, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission", without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 73?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 83 (*continued*)

Rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee

Report of the First Committee (Part II) (A/52/612/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the First Committee in paragraph 4 of Part II of its report (A/52/612/Add.1).

The First Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 83?

It was so decided.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 114, and 114 together with 153 and 157, as well as 118.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Mr. Djamel Moktefi of Algeria, to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the honour to introduce today the reports of the Fifth Committee on its deliberations at its third resumed fifty-second session. The Fifth Committee held its third resumed session for a period of one week, from 17 to 21 August 1998.

Because the relevant reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on some issues on its agenda for the last part of the resumed fifty-second session — as contained in document A/C.5/52/L.57 — were unavailable, the Committee decided to defer their consideration and to concentrate only on the following questions:

First, the proposed United Nations Code of Conduct, under agenda items 114, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", 153, "Human resources management" and 157, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals"; secondly, the question of improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee; thirdly, item 114 on the question of strengthening external oversight mechanisms; and, finally, item 118 on the Joint Inspection Unit.

With regard to the proposed United Nations Code of Conduct, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution entitled "Revisions to article 1 of the Staff Regulations and chapter 1 of the 100 series of the Staff Rules", as indicated in paragraph 7 of the report of the Committee, contained in document A/52/955/Add.1.

Under agenda item 114 — "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations" — the Committee recommends to the General Assembly one draft decision concerning the question of improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee, contained in paragraph 5 of document A/52/746/Add.4.

Regarding the item on the Joint Inspection Unit, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly a draft decision, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the report of the Committee, contained in document A/52/842/Add.2.

Finally, with regard to the strengthening of external oversight mechanisms, the Committee agreed to resume consideration of this question during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

The President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless the Secretariat was notified otherwise in advance.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of Part V of its report, in document A/52/746/Add.4.

The draft decision is entitled "Improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Canada, New Zealand and Australia in explanation of position on the procedural decision just taken on improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee.

Our delegations regret that the Fifth Committee was unable to make more progress on this issue during the fifty-second session and that a substantive decision did not prove possible. The need for the Fifth Committee to have a good look at itself and to take practical steps to improve the way it works has never been greater, as observed by its own Chairman in his closing remarks at the third resumed session. We agree fully with Ambassador Chowdhury that if the Committee fails to meet this challenge and improve drastically its own working methods, it must face the prospect of future irrelevance.

While there are limits to what can be achieved through legislative action, there are, we believe, concrete measures that could be taken. Delegations, the Bureau, the Secretariat and relevant subsidiary and expert bodies could be reminded of their respective roles and responsibilities. The chronic problems with availability of documentation could be addressed. The respective scheduling of sessions of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions could be reviewed. Work of the Fifth Committee could be prioritized, and much better use could be made of the time available.

Indeed, these proposals and others have been under discussion in the Fifth Committee and appeared to present little difficulty for most delegations. Our delegations were surprised, therefore, that at the final hour some delegations were unable to accept a very modest package of proposals to enhance the Committee's working methods. Such a package could have served as a beginning to a process of renewal and reorientation in the Fifth Committee.

Our delegations stand ready to continue the task of improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee in the next session of the Assembly, and to that end we

look forward to working closely with the incoming Bureau. But we do trust that any resumption of this work will be accompanied by the requisite desire and will to change and to work for the common good on the part of all delegations. We remain optimistic that this is possible, given the solid foundations laid by the outgoing Chairman of the Fifth Committee, Ambassador Chowdhury, for whom we have the greatest admiration and to whom we wish to express our gratitude.

Mr. Atiyanto (Indonesia): It would be remiss if my delegation did not say a few words concerning the issue of improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee. Let me first, however, express our deep appreciation and thanks to Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Chairman of the Fifth Committee for the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, for his tireless efforts in leading the discussion on improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee.

My delegation holds the view that we should not be disheartened that our consideration of this subject could not be completed during the session. Rather, we are heartened that discussion on this subject has received serious attention and great interest from many delegations.

We do not believe that the importance of improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee could not be ·ared by the delegations. We do not believe that the Member States are of the opinion that the work of the Fifth Committee could not be further improved. However, we do believe and understand that our discussion on improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee has not been perfect. Therefore, what has become fundamental for us is to find any common ground that could be recognized by and meet the concerns of all. Our understanding must be for the best interests of the Organization and a true reflection of the wishes of the Member States.

Having said that, my delegation maintains — and I believe that other members of the Group of 77 and China share the view — that it is important for us to continue our joint efforts to make the work of the Fifth Committee better and more productive in the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. In this regard, the collegial spirit and partnership that has permeated the delegations so far has, in fact, already proved to be an important asset and, therefore, must be maintained.

The President: We have heard the last speaker on this agenda item. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude this stage of its consideration of agenda item 114?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 114, 153 and 157 *(continued)*

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Human resources management

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part II) (A/52/955/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of Part II of its report (A/52/955/Add.1). The draft resolution is entitled "Revisions to article I of the Staff Regulations and chapter I of the 100 series of the Staff Rules".

The Fifth Committee adopted this draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 52/252).

Mrs. Powles (New Zealand): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Our delegations welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of revisions to article I of the Staff Regulations and chapter I of the Staff Rules, originally proposed by the Secretary-General as the United Nations Code of Conduct.

We are pleased that the Fifth Committee has been able to approve these amendments by consensus before the end of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, rather than taking the well-worn route of deferment to yet another session. Indeed, it is our sincere hope that this overdue attempt by the Fifth Committee to focus and prioritize its work in order to conclude agenda items will be the norm rather than the exception in the forthcoming session.

Our three delegations would like again to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee, Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, for his dedication in bringing this agenda item to a close, thereby paving the way for the General Assembly to endorse a key element of the Secretary-General's Track 2 reforms. We also wish to thank the delegate of Algeria, Mr. Djamel Moktefi, for his effective coordination of the agenda item in the Fifth Committee, and all delegations who worked together in the spirit of cooperation and friendship.

Our delegations have spoken many times about the importance of a total commitment of excellence from United Nations managers and staff to their duties. These amendments to Staff Rules and Regulations, just approved, chart the boundaries of expected and appropriate behaviour for persons in positions of responsibility in the United Nations. They are standards of ethical and professional conduct set in a framework of accountability for performance and are designed to avoid real or apparent conflict of interest. These standards should not be contravened. We expect that this clearer definition of rights and obligations will be welcomed by United Nations staff members.

The principles of integrity, competence and efficiency are enshrined in Article 101 of the United Nations Charter. The revised text of the Staff Rules and Regulations will serve to give greater effect to these principles. The Secretary-General has often pointed out that United Nations staff are the most important resource of this Organization. We agree, and we will continue to value highly the professionalism and, as important, the loyalty to the Secretary-General shown by his dedicated and hard-working staff.

Mr. Sulaiman (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation would simply like to draw the attention of the Secretariat to a translation mistake in paragraph (f) of the draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.59, which is contained in the report of the Rapporteur, document A/52/955/Add.1. The Arabic version of this paragraph mentions "financial status" whereas in fact it should say "financial situation". We had asked that this term be corrected, but this has yet to be done.

The President: I thank the representative of Syria for drawing the Secretariat's attention to the translation of this document. His statement will be taken into consideration when the final document is prepared.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda items 114, 153 and 157?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 118 *(continued)*

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (Part III) (A/52/842/Add.2)

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of Part III of its report.

The draft decision was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft decision was adopted.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 118?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 57

The situation in Burundi

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session. In view of the fact that the Assembly is expected to consider at its fifty-third session a request from Burundi contained in document A/53/290 to delete this item from the agenda of the fifty-third session, may I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude our consideration of agenda item 57?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 61

Question of Cyprus

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session but deferred a decision on the allocation of the item to an appropriate time during the session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session. May I take it, then, that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 61.

Agenda item 117

Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session. May I take it, then, that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 117.

Agenda item 128

Financing of the United Nations Operation in Somalia II

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 128.

Agenda item 134

Financing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 134.

Agenda item 154

Financing of the Military Observer Group of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala

The President: Members may recall that on 19 September 1997 the General Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-third session. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 154.

Agenda item 162

Election of judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

The President: Members may recall that on 2 June 1998 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

Members are also aware that the Security Council was not in a position to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-second session the nominations for judges for the International Tribunal for Rwanda in accordance with article 12 of the Statute of the Tribunal.

Bearing this in mind and also bearing in mind that this item has already been included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session, may I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude consideration of agenda item 162?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 163

Election of judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

The President: Members may recall that on 2 June 1998 the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

Members will also recall that in his letter of 27 August 1998 addressed to me, contained in document A/52/1023, the President of the Security Council transmitted the text of Security Council resolution 1191 (1998), adopted unanimously by the Security Council at its 3919th meeting, held on 27 August 1998, which, *inter alia*, forwarded to the General Assembly the nine nominations for judges of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in accordance with article 13(d) of the Statute of the International Tribunal.

As Member States were not in a position to duly consider the nine nominations in order for the General Assembly to elect the three additional judges during its fifty-second session, may I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 163.

Agenda items that remain for consideration during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly

The President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items, on which action has been taken at previous meetings, have remained open for consideration during the fifty-second session: items 10, 11, 16, 20, 36, 37, 43 to 45, 47, 104, 112, 113, 115, 116, 119 to 127, 129 to 133, 135 to 143, 159 and 161.

As members are aware, these items, with the exception of item 115, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997", have been included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session.

May I take it that the Assembly considers that discussion of these items at the present session is concluded?

It was so decided.

Closing address by the President

The President: We are about to conclude the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, leaving behind us a year of hard work, intensive discussions, momentous decisions and, occasionally, cautious "indecisions".

The session has taken place against the background of complex international transformations, where positive trends and promising developments have often been overshadowed by new threats to international peace and security and alarming social and economic upheaval. On the one hand, international relations continued to reap the benefits brought about by the end of the cold war and the collapse of the bipolar system. On the other hand, however, the past year has given us a fresh, sobering testimony that the end of one era and the onset of a new

millennium do not automatically bring with them an end to conflict and adversity. As we held our deliberations in this Hall, fresh crises, man-made or natural, broke out, just as old conflicts and problems continued to fester, constantly thrusting this Organization into the midst of new, complex tasks and challenges.

It is a convincing testimony to the relevance of this most representative body of the United Nations that during the fifty-second session it worked with dedication, persistence and creativity on an imposing list of matters of great importance to the international community. In the course of this session the General Assembly has considered a total of 163 items, holding 92 plenary meetings and 22 meetings in the format of open-ended informal consultations of the plenary. The Assembly adopted 298 resolutions and 146 decisions. Without pretending to provide an exhaustive analysis of the outcome of its work, I would like to highlight briefly some of the issues that received special prominence at this session.

In the field of international peace and security, the General Assembly has taken a major step forward by adopting a resolution on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. In a decision designed to further promote the regime of nuclear nonproliferation, the Assembly adopted a consensus resolution supporting the initiative to establish one more nuclear-weapon-free zone, in Central Asia. The significance of that step became even more apparent in the light of the recent nuclear tests in southern Asia.

Throughout the past year, United Nations peacekeeping activities have remained under the permanent focus of the Assembly and its relevant bodies, which continued to address in full their different aspects and acute problems, ranging from the financing of the peacekeeping operations to the issues of gratis personnel.

Taking into account that 1998 marks the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping, it should be noted that this session has also made a sizeable contribution to the preparation for the forthcoming commemorative meeting to mark that solemn occasion, to be held on 6 October. In particular, I have in mind the elaboration of the declaration in commemoration of those who served in the United Nations peacekeeping operations, to be adopted at that meeting. And I am proud that the initiative to adopt that document belongs to my country, Ukraine.

The Assembly's continued concern about the situation in the Middle East found its reflection in the resumption of the meetings of its tenth emergency special session, bringing once again the issues of settlements, the rights of the Palestinian people and the observance of international humanitarian law into sharp focus.

Another example of the immediate pertinence of the Assembly's work at this session was the adoption by the Assembly of the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. The need for urgent international action on this matter has been underscored by the recent series of terrorist bombings in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

In the battle against the scourge of crimes against humanity, the establishment of the International Criminal Court was a historic step towards making the rule of law the rule of all lands on this planet. It came as a result of more than two years of intensive preparatory work at the United Nations and followed over 50 years of sporadic efforts to create such an institution. And only a few days ago, in a first for any international court, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda handed down a judgement on the crime of genocide.

Those two events demonstrated the will of the international community to act without delay on that vital issue, as well as the ability of the United Nations to create effective mechanisms for establishing a workable international legal system and further promoting universal human rights. In this regard, I cannot help but mention the decision made at this session reiterating the importance of the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The commemoration of this historic document is certain to become one of the landmark events of the next session.

Clearly, these are examples of encouraging signs of international cooperation in addressing global problems. Another vivid example of this approach was the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held during the Assembly's current session. By adopting by consensus three fundamental documents, Member States set ambitious yet clear objectives and targets for joint action and approved a well-designed strategy comprising a package of measures and goals to be achieved within a specific timetable.

The challenge of ensuring sound economic and social development remained paramount during the Assembly's work at the fifty-second session. In order to

review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Assembly decided to convene next year a special session at the highest level of participation. As a direct result of another decision of the session, a high-level dialogue on the social and economic impact of globalization and interdependence and their policy implications will be held at the beginning of the new session, underscoring the crucial importance attached by the United Nations to this issue. Once again, the relevance of those decisions was punctuated by the financial crisis in Asia, whose repercussions were acutely felt all over the world and which were followed by market tremors in such far-flung places as Russia and the United States.

During the current session of the General Assembly, much attention was attached to the problem of Africa. The Security Council held two meetings dedicated to the situation in that part of the world. There are still persistent problems that continue to negatively impact the situation in many countries of the continent, especially the world's poorest nations.

It is my hope that the General Assembly and other relevant organs and bodies of the United Nations will continue to give adequate attention to Africa's problems and facilitate its transformation in the context of creating the conditions for its peaceful economic and social development. In this regard, I would like to welcome the election of Nelson Mandela, the President of South Africa, as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. This will undoubtedly greatly contribute to the solution of worldwide problems, African in particular.

If there was one single topic, one underlying theme that distinguished this session from others, it was the issue of revitalizing the United Nations. After Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted his package of far-reaching measures and proposals to the Assembly, questions relating to the renewal of the world Organization dominated discussions during the session. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his unswerving commitment to the cause of reform and his readiness to cooperate closely with the Assembly during its consideration of this vital subject.

As a result of innovative thinking, a new format of deliberations — the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary — has been introduced. It has enabled all delegations to participate in the discussions on the important issue of United Nations reform and to contribute actively to the final outcome. I think that this format has proved its effectiveness and may be preserved during further deliberations on reform matters at the fifty-third session. Following intensive informal consultations of the plenary and a number of informal informals conducted by my Office, and with the help of the Friends of the President, the General Assembly adopted two resolutions which not only demonstrated that the reform process was clearly on track, but also inspired widespread expectations that the spirit of consensus would guide us towards new substantive progress at this juncture.

We should admit, however, that the reality proved to be far more mundane. Although the Secretary-General's proposals were warmly welcomed by the membership, after almost nine months of further intensive consultations, consuming enormous amounts of time, efforts and conference services, all we could offer was the decision to send a considerable bulk of them for additional consideration during the fifty-third session.

What is particularly regrettable is that these delays concern not only the long-term proposals, but also the Secretary-General's recommendations on vital and urgent measures in the administrative and budgetary fields. Some, perhaps, may argue that the delays were inevitable because the issues before the General Assembly had been either too complicated or utterly confusing, and that the time allotted was too brief to resolve them. I believe, however, that this would be a weak excuse, neglecting the fact that any substantial progress towards meaningful decisions was thwarted by mistrust and suspicion that continued to exist among the Member States, as well as by our inability to move beyond the narrow positions of delegations and groupings in an effort to reach a common goal. This has been one of my big disappointments, which I feel compelled to share with the General Assembly.

Future deliberations on reform issues will serve as a litmus test of the political will of the membership to go ahead with genuine renewal of the Organization and an indication of Member States' readiness to seek mutually acceptable compromises in the true spirit of consensus that emerged in the course of the main part of the fifty-second session. The same fully applies to the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council.

It has been rightly said that any reform of the United Nations will be incomplete without the reform of its main organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security: the Security Council. In

the course of the general debate at this session alone, almost 160 speakers, including many Heads of State and Government, raised that issue in their statements. But once again, for all the eloquent appeals for change, we can report no visible movement from words to deeds. After 65 lengthy meetings held by the Working Group over the course of the session, the body charged with the task of preparing a blueprint for transforming the Council was once again unable to submit any agreed recommendations on any of the substantive issues related to Security Council reform.

While progress has been made in some areas, a number of major stumbling blocks prevented the Group from fulfilling its mandate. Among the most intractable is the problem of finding a magic number that would increase the representative character of the Council without impairing its efficiency. Beyond the question of the total size of an enlarged Council, controversy is still brewing around the creation of new permanent seats, rotational arrangements to fill those seats and, of course, the highly-charged problem of the veto right with respect to both current and prospective permanent members.

Given the fundamental nature of these differences, reform of the Security Council is probably one of the most difficult issues faced by the United Nations in its history. Obviously, its resolution requires much more than negotiating skills or, for that matter, a magician's sleight-of-hand. It will take political will and courage on the part of sovereign States to move ahead to a renewed Security Council that can better reflect the realities of the new century and more effectively serve the entire international community.

Let us also not forget that whatever ambitious reforms we may envision, the United Nations cannot function effectively unless it is adequately provided with financial resources in order to carry out its functions. Since Member States' annual contributions remain the only source of the United Nations regular budget, there is very little that can be done to overcome the financial crisis without Member States fulfilling their obligations under the United Nations Charter in full and without any preconditions.

No conclusive results were achieved in another ad hoc body of the Assembly, the Working Group on An Agenda for Peace. Extensive consultations on the remaining part of the Group's mandate convinced me that a number of significant differences in the positions of Member States remain. In particular, I refer to the problem of reconciling the principle of national sovereignty with the possibility of launching timely preventive action without obtaining the consent of the Government concerned. Another area of controversy is post-conflict peace-building. The major sticking point was the issue of assigning the key role in this area to the General Assembly. At this point, my recommendation to my successor is to continue to consult on the matter during the fifty-third session of the Assembly.

Delegates have probably noticed that in my concluding remarks I have devoted some time to the theme of unfinished tasks and deferred decisions. Undoubtedly, the fifty-second session can boast significant accomplishments in many important areas, but I felt that a measure of critical self-analysis could prove more salutary than an attempt at self-congratulation.

On the last day of my presiding at this podium, I would also like to take this opportunity to note with satisfaction the continuing trend towards strengthening the role of the General Assembly presidency. In following up resolution 51/241, some practical measures have already been put into effect towards these ends.

For my part, as President of the General Assembly I tried to direct and organize our proceedings in such a way as to expedite and make more effective our deliberations on the issues of crucial importance to the Organization. In line with the recommendations of the Assembly, I made every effort to improve coordination with the Presidents of other main organs of the United Nations, especially the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, with whom I held regular consultations throughout the session.

On a personal note, I would like to say that presiding over this session has proved to be an extremely gratifying but challenging experience. After long hours of intensive — and sometimes tense — consultations and negotiations, and no less arduous work to resolve a myriad of organizational and procedural matters, I would strongly disagree with those who might view this post of President of the General Assembly as largely ceremonial.

In the course of the year I had to share my time between my duties as President of the General Assembly, Foreign Minister of Ukraine and Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights of the Ukrainian Parliament. All this commanded a great deal of my physical, psychological and intellectual capacities, and I sincerely hope that this multiplicity of responsibilities did

not affect the efficiency of my work as President of the General Assembly.

In view of my shift to parliamentary work, I am sad to say that this was probably my last session of the General Assembly. At the same time, I am very proud that I have been involved in multilateral diplomacy for almost 40 years. Each and every one of them, and especially this year of my presidency, has explicitly proved to me the ever-growing importance of the United Nations system in today's world and in the years to come. Standing at the end of my long diplomatic career, I am convinced that Member States of the universal Organization must do everything possible to preserve and strengthen the whole machinery of the United Nations in all its variety and diversity.

I also strongly believe that the present United Nations membership is capable of accomplishing what the Commission that worked to establish this world Organization after the 1945 San Francisco Conference said in its final report: to be fully effective the United Nations would have to capture the imagination of the world. It was true then and it is still vital today as we strive for a new, revitalized United Nations.

Before concluding the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, let me extend my sincere appreciation to all the delegations for their assistance and very instrumental cooperation and for their active work during these months.

I would also like to express my special thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose close cooperation I have enjoyed throughout the whole 12-month period of our work. Since his appointment we have constantly witnessed the increased role of the United Nations in the world affairs. His dedication and tireless efforts towards making this Organization stronger and better prepared to cope with the complex challenges of a new millennium deserve our full appreciation and support.

My words of gratitude also go to all the Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly and all Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteurs of the Main Committees for their excellent contribution to our common achievements. Greater, more regular involvement of the Vice-Presidents as Acting Presidents of the General Assembly enabled them to be more closely connected to the activities of the Assembly and ensured its smooth functioning throughout the year.

And finally, I would like to thank the United Nations Secretariat, particularly the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and its General Assembly Servicing Branch, and I would like to thank personally all interpreters, translators and Conference Services officers, as well as security officers, who often remain unnoticed but without whom the smooth functioning of the Assembly session would have been impossible.

I thank you all.

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the fifty-second session

The President: I declare closed the fifty-second session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at noon.